

SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

The Independent Bulletin of Science Policy

Vol. VII, No. 7

P.O. Box 6226A, Washington, D.C. 20015

April 15, 1977

Carter's Science Aide Gets Long Grilling on Capitol Hill

Frank Press, the White House science adviser, got caught last week between a drowsy Senate subcommittee chairman and an ambitious and pesky astronaut Republican freshman. As a result, Press' confirmation hearing turned into a two-hour marathon that was more notable for high-vacuum dialog than substantive content.

The hearing, presided over by Senator Adlai Stevenson (D-Ill.), chairman of the subcommittee on science and space of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, was expected to be a brief,

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ritualistic affair. Press, former chairman of the MIT Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, is non-controversial, and his post, with all respect to the hopes showered on it by the scientific community, is a relatively minor one in the Washington scheme of things. Half an hour of polite exchanges, punctuated by many congratulations, is *de rigueur* in such circumstances, and the nominee hurries back to work, closely trailed by the usual entourage of briefcase-clutching assistants.

Brevity, however, was not in the cards for Dr. Press that day.

The nominee was flanked at the witness table by none other than Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), whose presence could be attributed to the custom of permitting Senators from a nominee's home state to introduce him at confirmation hearings. Kennedy, however, has more than neighborly interest in Press and the office he heads, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, for it was Kennedy who fathered the

legislation that created OSTP — only to have the jurisdiction taken away from him in the recent Senate reorganization. The plum, such as it may be, was passed to the newly created subcommittee headed by Stevenson, who, though the offspring of a distinguished politician, does not appear destined for the Senate hall of fame. In fact, he's generally regarded as one of lesser lights in a legislative body that is pretty mediocre. The subcommittee chairmanship, however, is the best forum that he has achieved for acquiring visibility and influence among his colleagues, and he apparently wants to exploit it.

Stevenson's difficulties, unfortunately, do not end with Kennedy, who shares an adjacent jurisdiction through chairmanship of the science and health subcommittee of the newly created Human Resources Committee, a post that, among other things, gives Kennedy jurisdiction over the National Science Foundation. For, sitting right there on Stevenson's sub-

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In Brief

The Carter Administration claims to have a computerized "talent bank" of some 40,000 names — including many still-unemployed campaign workers — from which it says it's filling government slots. Nevertheless, a top aide to a Cabinet member was phoning around town the other day, asking if anyone could suggest a speechwriter for the Secretary, at "around \$40,000 a year."

Postscript to Swine Flu: 88 million unused vaccine doses, valued at \$44 million, are in storage. Four cases were reported over the past year.

Meanwhile, the fall guy for the swine flu debacle, David Sencer, is being replaced as director of the Center for Disease Control by William H. Forege, a 10-year CDC veteran who became assistant director last year.

Senator Lee Metcalf (D-Mont.), pursuing his fascination with federal advisory committees, says that their costs are actually greater than the \$60-million-year usually cited. Added in, he says, should be the price of the many federal employees who attend meetings as on-lookers. Example: 37 "government visitors" attending a two-day meeting of the Outer Continental Shelf Research Management Advisory Board, in April, 1975, according to Metcalf.

NSF, Commerce Appointments

Acting Director Richard Atkinson is the Administration's choice for Director of the National Science Foundation, and it's only the usual paperwork delay that's holding up the announcement, according to White House sources.

Meanwhile, Jordan Baruch, professor of business administration, Dartmouth College, has been selected to succeed Betsy Ancker-Johnson at the Commerce Department as assistant secretary for science and technology.

...OSTP Alloted a Lean Staff by White House

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committee is a member who actually knows a great deal about science and space — Harrison Schmitt (R-New Mexico), a Ph.D. geologist and former moon walker, the only one who did not come from a military background. In considerable depth, Schmitt knows all kinds of things about science and space that appear to be only dimly perceived by the chairman, and, as the hearing proceeded, Schmitt was neither shy nor brief in exhibiting his expertise. (Through Stevenson's subcommittee numbers nine Senators, only the chairman and Schmitt showed up for the confirmation hearing, which is a measure of both the importance attached to the post and the chairman's pulling power).

In preparation for the hearing, Stevenson's staff gave Press a kind of take-home exam — a list of 75 questions that fairly well exhausted anything that might be involved in science and government relations. Press, a cautious and late arrival in the Carter Administration, responded with written answers that suggest that when he made his career choice some years back, seismology's gain was the legal profession's loss. (For example, in response to the question: "What needs to be done to stimulate the private sector to increase investment in research and development projects?" his written reply states: "I do not know specifically . . . As I indicated earlier, it is an area I believe is important . . . A first important step is to digest and assimilate what we know about current trends in industry and to review relevant policy research in this area.")

In questioning Press at the hearing, Stevenson — who, at times, appeared to be lapsing into sleep — mainly ranged over the questions and answers covered in the written material. He did draw out, however, that as part of Mr. Carter's effort to trim the White House staff, Press would have to make do, at least initially, with only one of the four associate directors authorized in the OSTP legislation. Press added, though, that he felt sure the President would be sympathetic if more help was needed.

He also explained that he was taking two year's leave from MIT to join the Administration, though he intends to stay on for at least a full presidential term.

The leave, he said, was to protect himself "in case I'm fired."

At which point Schmitt offered the thought that since MIT is a big beneficiary of federal R&D funds, Press was in a conflict-of-interest situation. The nominee then charitably offered to resign from MIT, but was deterred by Kennedy, who said that it was desirable for university faculty members to obtain first-hand experience in government. Kennedy added that "Resignation is more than anyone can ask."

Schmitt then launched into a series of questions, few of them short, ranging from the adequacy of funding for basic research to the problems of technology, the breeder reactor, and the Third World. Stressing the broad mandate held by the subcommittee, he even suggested that it might take up recombinant DNA research, a subject on which Kennedy and his subcommittee have been laboring for over a year.

And so it went for two hours. Stevenson remained in the game, courtesy of questions fed to him by his staff, but whenever a gap appeared, Schmitt was there, usually starting with the doleful announcement that "I have a few more questions," all of which appeared to be contained in his head.

The nomination faces no difficulty and will come before the full Senate shortly after the Easter recess, which ends April 18.—DSG

House Revives Car-Engine Bill

A bill designed to provide a large infusion of federal funds into research and development on more efficient automobile engines, which was passed by Congress last year but vetoed by President Ford, is rising from the ashes. An identical version has been reintroduced in the House with more than 100 co-sponsors and is expected to be reported by the House Science and Technology Committee by voice vote within a month. In the Senate, however, its chief champion, John Tunney, was defeated in last year's elections and the bill is lacking a sponsor.

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ISSN 0048-9581

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Independently published by *Science & Government Report, Inc.*, twice monthly, except once each in January, July and August. Annual Subscription: Institutions, \$75 (two years, \$140); individuals, \$44 (two years, \$75). Editorial offices at 3736 Kanawha St., N.W., Washington, DC 20015. Tel. (202) 244-4135. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC. Please address all subscription correspondence to Box 6226A, Northwest Station, Washington, DC 20015. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. SGR is available on Xerox University Microfilms.

"Unproject" Information System Lists Rejected R&D Proposals

The post-Sputnik boom in science information systems has focused exclusively on research that's been done or is being done. Now comes an outfit with an information system dedicated to research that *isn't* being done — the Unproject Register Service, a repository for rejected research proposals.

A spinoff of Urb Data Associates, a Greensburg, Pa., mining machinery firm, Unproject is offered as a defense against plagiarism by sticky-fingered application reviewers and also as a storehouse of data for those who might want to underwrite a particular piece of research.

According to C.J. Holway, executive vice president of Unproject, the service was started last August to list "proposals and plans for R&D projects which are not currently active due to a lack of funds." Holway told SGR that federal agencies are currently financing only about 10 per cent of the grant and contract proposals that they receive. These rejected

applications, she said, represent a vast amount of effort, and "The main purpose of the Unproject Register Service is to make a first step toward salvaging this scientific and technical effort."

Registration also provides protection against plagiarism, Unproject says in a press release. "In the process of evaluating a proposal," the release states, "reviewers utilize many persons both inside and outside of their structure. Until the formation of Unproject Register Service, there was no formal machinery to safeguard proprietary ideas, no check on the subsequent re-appearance of the original ideas in a proposal submitted later or even the incorporation of the idea as a refinement to a current proposal."

The cost of the service is \$9.50 to register an abstract and \$35 for a full proposal. For further information: Unproject Register Service, 305 South Pennsylvania Ave., Greensburg, Pa. 15601; tel. (412)836-4828.

Military Medical School May Survive DoD Axe

It looks as though Congress is going to contest Defense Secretary Brown's desire to perform institutional infanticide on the military medical school.

Properly known as the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, the controversial institution was in the midst of training its first freshman class when, on February 22, the newly appointed Defense Secretary said he would close it down for economy reasons at the end of the school year (SGR Vol. VII, No. 5). The move, he said, would reduce this year's Defense budget by \$14 million, and would spare further spending on a scheme with longterm costs that could run as high as \$200 million. Brown said the 32 students now enrolled would be given scholarships to continue their studies elsewhere.

The school was generally thought to be politically friendless since the retirement of its Congressional angel, Rep. F. Edward Hebert (D-La.), who put across his long-ridiculed dream back in 1972, shortly after becoming chairman of the Armed Services Committee. However, it turns out that it has plenty of friends, though the issue is not fully resolved on Capitol Hill, and even if the school survives there, Brown might get at it in other ways.

With former Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard, who is acting president and chairman of the school's board of trustees, leading a rescue expedition to the Congress, the early signs for survival are good. By an 18-4 vote, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted to put \$12.5 million for the school into a supplemental bill for the Defense Department for the current

fiscal year. The money isn't needed at this point, nor was it requested by Defense, but inclusion in the traditionally tight supplemental would serve as a signal of Congressional intent, and would also steady the nerves of students and faculty at the beleaguered institution. The full Senate confirmed the move with a 56-30 vote on April 1.

Hearings were also held before subcommittees of the House Appropriations Committee and the Armed Services Committee, and indications there, too, were favorable, though there was no opportunity to include the school in the House version of the supplemental since that had already gone through the legislative mill. However, when the House and Senate appropriations conferees got together to match up their bills, the House members agreed to inclusion of the funds. Because of some technicalities, funds for the school will have to be approved by the full House.

There are still some possibilities for slips along the way, but the prospects are considerably brighter than anyone expected they would be two months ago.

What apparently swung the case for the school were arguments that physician recruiting for the armed services is going so badly that revival of the doctor draft may be necessary. Against this background, the military medical school was presented as an institution that would produce career-oriented military physicians. Furthermore, Packard contested figures that make the school look like a costly alternative to providing scholarships for students at civilian schools. By his reckoning, the school is a bargain.

DNA Research Bill Permits Local Regulation

Following a series of discussions among senior Administration health officials, the Office of Management and Budget, and Congressional staff members, the Carter Administration has put together a bill designed to control recombinant DNA experiments in the United States.

Introduced in the Senate by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), the bill (S. 1217) is likely to be influential as committees in both the House and the Senate move ahead with plans to get legislation through Congress this summer.

The Administration's bill conforms closely to a draft version proposed last month by an inter-agency committee consisting of representatives from some 16 federal agencies (SGR Vol. VII, No. 6), though it differs in one key respect. It would allow state and local governments to set stricter local controls on the research than those which will be contained in the federal regulations. That provision, which reverses the inter-agency committee's recommendation that there should be one set of uniform national regulations, is causing some consternation among genetics researchers.

Though there has been no official explanation for the change, Administration sources said that it was felt that a move to usurp local action would generate bitterness and would increase the temperature of local debates. Another reason is that Congress would not have gone along with the idea of federal pre-emption of local controls. For one thing, Kennedy himself has recently been championing the cause of citizens' participation in science policymaking and he would have objected strongly to a provision likely to stifle the recent unprecedented spread of the recombinant DNA debate to citizens groups around the country.

Nevertheless, there is a strong case to be made for uniform controls. Several scientists have publicly supported the move to legislate national controls on the grounds that federal legislation would halt the drift toward the establishment of local regulations of varying stringency. The point has repeatedly been made that if one community prohibits or severely restricts the research, researchers will simply move to another, a

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Revived Brain Drain: Crick Leaving Britain for La Jolla Post

London. Francis Crick, of the Nobel laureate trio of *Double Helix* fame, is leaving Britain, lured by a \$1 million endowment at California's Salk Institute, and propelled by a rigid retirement rule and savage tax rates. Joining the growing ranks of what are referred to here as "tax exiles," Crick is the most prominent of an increasing number of top British scientists contemplating or taking part in a revived brain drain.

Academic salaries here have gone virtually unchanged for the past five years — a period in which the annual inflationary rate, now down to about 13 per cent, has soared as high as 26 per cent. By American standards, salaries are low, averaging about \$15,000 for a senior scientist. Cost-of-living comparisons are always difficult, but foreign visitors are usually shocked by the high level of some British prices. With recent tax increases, for example, gasoline now costs \$1.40 for a US-size gallon.

There is also widespread resentment over a policy of selective wage restraints that has resulted in a reduction in pay differentials. Just before Crick's decision became widely known, the differential issue ignited a strike which halted production at the British Leyland Motor Corporation, where skilled tool workers walked out because they now earn little more than unskilled employees.

In the laboratories, technicians can now earn about \$5000 a year, poor pay in the American

market, but still a figure that brings them closer than ever before to the wage-locked scientists whom they are supposed to be working for.

Academic income has also suffered from changes in the tax laws. Before 1974, British academics could work abroad for two months each year without being taxed by the British government, so long as they did not bring the money into the UK. This loophole has now been closed, however, and with tax rates running as high as 83 per cent, the value of any overseas earnings has been sharply reduced. The tax bite, coupled with strict adherence to retirement at 65, are said to have been the major reasons for Crick's departure from the Medical Research Council's Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge, where he has worked for 25 years. Crick and James Watson carried out the DNA research there for which they and Maurice Wilkins shared the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1962.

The director of the laboratory, Nobel laureate Max Perutz, has also been invited to go west, but despite newspaper stories to the contrary, he says he intends to remain in Britain.

This year's budget, as promised, provides some tax relief for the well and the poorly paid, but the change is relatively small and long-delayed in coming.

The \$1 million Salk endowment that helped inspire Crick's move was provided by the Kieckhefer Family Foundation, of Prescott, Ariz.—MK

White House Picks 20 for Mental Health Study

The presidential commission that is supposed to sort out the federal government's muddled role in mental health activities has now been appointed, and it seems as though most every interest — from ex-patients to an assortment of professionals — has got a representative or two among the 20 members.

With the presence of Mrs. Rosalynn Carter as honorary chairperson signifying serious presidential interest, the commission is scheduled to issue a preliminary report in September and a final report early next year (SGR Vol. VII, No. 4). Though the wide diversity of membership may impede harmony, the commission represents the best hope yet for putting direction and energy into a federal program that has gotten bogged down in squabbling among various interests.

The commission members, selected by the President and Mrs. Carter from among names submitted by a screening committee headed by John Gardner, chairman of Common Cause, are:

Priscilla Allan, a former patient and California legislative activist and author concerning the mentally ill.

Alan Beigel, MD, psychiatrist, and Director of the Southern Arizona Mental Health Center.

Thomas E. Bryant, MD, JD, (executive director), President of the Drug Abuse Council.

Jose Carbanes, legal adviser and Director of Government Relations, Yale University.

John Conger, Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Colorado School of Medicine.

Thomas Conlan, Cincinnati attorney, member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Virginia Dayton, a volunteer active in several mental health organizations in Minnesota.

LaDonna Harris, a leader of the Indian rights movement.

Beverly Long, associated with mental health policy activities in Georgia.

Ruth B. Love, Superintendent of Schools in Oakland, Calif.

Florence Mahoney, since 1950, co-chairman of the National Committee Against Mental Illness.

Martha Mitchell, Associate Director of Nursing, Connecticut Mental Health Center.

Mildred Mitchell-Bateman, MD, Commissioner, West Virginia Department of Mental Health.

Harold Richman, Dean, University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration.

James B. Richmond, MD, Director, Judge Baker Guidance Center, Boston.

Reymundo Rodriguez, Executive Assistant, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, University of Texas, Austin.

George Tarjan, MD, Director, Mental Retardation and Child Psychiatry Division, UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute.

Franklin E. Vilas Jr., an Episcopal minister active in mental health activities in New York and formerly in Massachusetts.

Glenn Watts, President, Communications Workers of America.

Charles V. Willie, Professor of Education and Urban Studies, Graduate School of Education, Harvard.

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situation which would be somewhat hypocritical since any potential hazards arising from the research would not respect political boundaries.

It should be noted, however, that many local governments are concerning themselves with the recombinant DNA debate because of weaknesses in guidelines issued last year by the National Institutes of Health, which now govern all federally funded recombinant DNA experiments. The weaknesses include the fact that the guidelines do not apply to industrially supported research and they do not contain formal enforcement provisions. Since the federal legislation will take care of those complaints at least, the urgency of establishing local controls may be blunted.

In other respects, the Administration's bill contains few surprises. It would require the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) to establish formal regulations within a year, after allowing plenty of opportunity for public input. It would set up a licensing arrangement under which facilities housing recombinant DNA experiments would first have to obtain licenses from HEW. And it would provide for fines of up to \$5000 per day for violations of the regu-

lations. It also contains a section protecting the rights of laboratory workers who blow the whistle on researchers or institutions which flout the rules.

Kennedy said when he introduced the bill that he's not necessarily wedded to the Administration's ideas, but he is expected to go along with the basic thrust of the proposals. Similarly, the House health and environment subcommittee, headed by Rep. Paul Rogers (D-Fla.), is expected to produce legislation which will not be radically different from the Administration's proposals.

During public hearings held on April 6 by the Senate health subcommittee, however, Kennedy suggested that, to ensure public participation in the formulation and application of federal regulations, he might propose the establishment of a regulatory commission within HEW containing a majority of members who are not involved in the research.

In any case, both the Rogers subcommittee and the Kennedy subcommittee are moving swiftly on the bill. Since the bill will authorize expenditures to implement the federal regulations, the new Congressional budget timetable requires that it be reported out of committee by May 15.

NSF Weighs Conversion of CIA Salvage Vessel

A study conducted for the National Science Foundation (NSF) has concluded that the Glomar Explorer, the secret salvage ship used by the Central Intelligence Agency to hoist bits of a Soviet submarine from the bottom of the Pacific, could be converted into a research vessel capable of drilling into the ocean floor in places which are now beyond reach.

Though it is by no means certain that NSF will get the funds needed to convert and operate the vessel, the prospect has already been greeted with enthusiasm by earth scientists, who see the Explorer as providing a cut-price way to continue deep ocean drilling after the highly successful Deep Sea Drilling Project (DSDP) expires in a couple of years' time.

The study, carried out by Global Marine Inc., the company which built the Glomar Explorer for the CIA, concludes that the ship could be converted into a drilling vessel for a minimum of about \$34 million. For an outlay of \$52 million, the ship could be converted into a more sophisticated research vessel capable of drilling virtually anywhere.

Ever since it became publicly known a couple of years ago that the Glomar Explorer was a CIA vessel, the federal government has been wondering what to do with it. At one time, the General Services Administration, which took over the ownership of the vessel, canvassed other government agencies to see whether any use could be found for the ship; when there were no takers, serious consideration was given to sending the \$300 million vessel to the breakers. In the end, however, it was mothballed and it now resides in Suisun Bay, near San Francisco.

The potential value of the Explorer for earth sciences is that it could mean the difference between an expanded program of ocean drilling and no ocean drilling at all. The Deep Sea Drilling Project has been under way now for nearly a decade and it has already extended the present drilling vessel, the Glomar Challenger, to its limit. The DSDP has turned up masses of scientific information about the movement of the crustal plates and the history of the Earth, but some of

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Europeans Fail to Agree on Site for Fusion Reactor

London. The European Economic Community has failed in what was billed as the final attempt to pick a site for the Joint European Torus (JET), a major fusion research project comparable to the Tokamak Fusion Test Reactor at Princeton. JET, estimated at over \$200 million, has been looking for a home for more than two years — ever since the European team based at Culham, in England, and led by a Frenchman, Paul Rebut, completed the basic design of the machine.

The EEC research ministers called a meeting at the end of March to decide between the two sites still in the race — Garching, in West Germany, and Culham, near Oxford. An earlier ministers' meeting had decided that JET should be built at an established fusion research laboratory, which ruled out the French and Italian sites.

By the time the EEC ministers got together in March a concentrated round of country-to-country negotiations had sorted out most of the background issues — such as sharing out the contracts and how the project would be managed — and there was said to be a marginal preference for Culham as a site. But then agriculture arrived on the scene.

When the research ministers sat down to discuss JET, the EEC was still reeling from the impact of an earlier meeting of agriculture ministers. This was supposed to have fixed food commodity prices in the EEC for the coming year, but Britain blocked agree-

ment on this. The UK wanted to do something about the "butter mountain" that has built up over recent years. High farm prices and high prices to the consumer boosted butter production and suppressed consumption, so the amount of butter in storage grew and grew until the EEC started to sell it abroad, to the Soviet Union for example, at prices thought to be scandalously low by EEC members. The British demands for lower butter prices and subsidies on butter sales are said to have turned several EEC countries against Culham as a site for JET.

In the end the research ministers ended their meeting at 4:30 a.m. with a decision to meet again in a month's time. JET is now living on borrowed time. The funds it has been allocated run out at the end of June, and the JET team has maintained that since it will take three months to close the project, there can be no meaningful activity after the end of March. This looks like another piece of brinkmanship, but JET has come so near the edge so often that it could fall over if something isn't done soon. Already there have been rumors that the US plans to poach some of the JET team for its own fusion program — rumors that are denied by US officials. Also, it has been hinted that if the EEC does not site JET soon, the UK will try to negotiate a bilateral collaboration arrangement with the US. But this too could be another ploy in the complicated business of EEC politics.—MK

US-USSR Chemical Warfare Talks Bogged Down

Overshadowed by the failed SALT talks in Moscow, Soviet and American representatives met in Geneva earlier this month for a second round of negotiations aimed at developing a joint proposal on chemical disarmament. Though modest progress was made and some common ground was reached, Administration sources have told SGR that the basic issues separating the two sides remain unresolved and no joint proposal is yet in sight.

A joint US-USSR initiative on chemical weapons was first promised in July 1974 as part of a summit agreement reached by President Nixon and Secretary Brezhnev. It was hoped that a common understanding could be reached to break a deadlock in chemical disarmament talks, which have been droning on in Geneva under United Nations' auspices for several years. But the promised bilateral discussions didn't start until August of last year, and after two sessions, the two sides are still divided on such issues as how a chemical weapons control agreement could be adequately verified.

Nevertheless, Administration officials indicate that there is at least some cause for optimism. The bilateral discussions are providing a basis for further talks and, given sufficient political commitment from both sides, a limited agreement, perhaps starting with a ban on new production, is entirely possible.

There is, moreover, a collection of factors within the US which may result in a stronger political commitment, at least on the US side. One is the introduction in the House and Senate of a resolution calling for a moratorium on the production of new chemical weapons by the US, and the destruction of 3000 tons of mustard gas stockpiles as a gesture of good faith.

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the most intriguing areas for drilling now lie beyond the Challenger's capabilities in the deep ocean trenches, for example, where long drill strings and heavy lifting capacity are required, and under the Arctic ice, where a strong hull would be needed.

To build a vessel with those capabilities could cost as much as \$100 million, NSF officials reckon, which would probably be beyond NSF's strained budget. The Glomar Explorer, which could be refitted for less than half that amount, would do nicely, however.

Nevertheless, even \$34 million would be a sizeable addition to NSF's budget, and the cost of operating the vessel — between \$28,000 to \$33,000 a day — would make the ocean drilling program into an expensive operation. If NSF does decide to make a strong pitch for the Glomar Explorer, it is therefore likely to seek international participation in the program. —CN

Proposed by Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.) and Rep. Richard Schultze (R-Pa.), the resolution has already attracted some attention and should at least serve to keep the issue of chemical weapons control in the public eye.

Another point to note is that Rep. Clement Zablocki (D-Wisc.), who has supported chemical weapons control measures in the past, is now chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, a position which places him in a pivotal position in such matters.

But a more potent issue is the fact that the Army is waiting in the wings with a proposal for a billion dollar program to replace its aging chemical stockpiles with new binary weapons if the negotiating impasse is not broken.

The Army has been conducting research and development on binary weapons for more than a decade, and it has developed a 155mm binary shell to deliver the weapons. Under development by the Navy is a large binary bomb, called Big Eye.

In 1974, the Department of Defense requested funds from Congress to begin converting the Pine Bluff chemical weapons facility in Arkansas into a production plant for the binary shells, the idea being to replace its chemical stockpiles with the new, supposedly safer weapons. But, after lengthy debate, Congress turned down the request. The following year, the Army again put in a request for funds for its binary program, but this time the House Armed Services Committee deleted the funds from the Pentagon's budget. The Committee noted that initiation of the binary weapons program would derail the Geneva talks, but warned that if the talks failed to produce any results, it would look more favorably on future requests for the program.

The Army consequently waited one year. No funds for binary weapons were requested in the FY 1977 budget request, submitted to Congress early in 1976. But last year, in its early budget proposals for FY 1978, the Army again requested funds to start production of its new chemical weapons. The funds were denied by the Office of Management and Budget, however, and did not appear in President Ford's final budget request.

According to Administration sources, the Department of Defense objected strongly to deletion of the funds by OMB, but Ford decided that rather than reinstating the request, he would pass the matter on to his successor. Those moves clearly indicate that the binary program is far from being a dead letter. If the United Nations' talks again deadlock when they reconvene in July, the Army can be expected to push again for a start to be made on the production of binary shells, and it is likely to get a sympathetic hearing, at least in the House Armed Services Committee. —CN

GAO Study Queries Accuracy of R&D Statistics

Is it possible that seriously erroneous data are carelessly being fed into the statistical service that annually publishes the holy numbers on government spending for research and development?

The numbers, which are published by the National Science Foundation in its series on *Federal Funds for Research, Development, and Other Scientific Activities*, provide the main grist for arguments over the adequacy of federal support for R&D. In recent years, the tabulations in that report have been the basis for the widely accepted conclusion that R&D purchasing power has sunk back to the level of perhaps half a dozen years ago. And it was on the basis of those numbers that the Ford Administration chose to give R&D a big boost in its last two budgets.

The possibility of serious misreporting is raised by the General Accounting Office in a report titled "Federal Agencies' Contracting for Research and Development in the Private, Profitmaking Sector." Based on a study requested by Senator Charles Percy, of Illinois, ranking Republican on the Governmental Affairs Committee, the report examined only a small slice of the federal government's involvement in R&D: fiscal year 1975 contracts to profitmaking firms for projects costing over \$100,000, issued by six agencies — the Maritime Administration, the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Office of the Secretary of Transportation. Involved were 111 contracts, for a total of \$35.8 million, a piddling amount in a year when total federal R&D spending approached \$20 billion.

Nevertheless, GAO found that at least some of the agencies had failed to report relatively large R&D expenditures, mainly because the funds — though supporting research activities — came from agency divisions that did not have direct responsibility for R&D.

Noting that "Agencies did not always" abide by NSF's instructions for reporting R&D spending, the GAO report states: "For example, EPA reported \$52 million in R&D obligations to profitmaking firms in fiscal year 1975. However, this amount was based only on obligations from EPA's R&D appropriations. An additional \$22 million was identified at the agency's procurement office as obligations for R&D financed by other appropriations."

A similar case was cited in the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, where a "major portion" of the \$43 million budget of a division was improperly omitted from a report of spending on R&D.

The GAO report also faulted the six agencies for extensively modifying existing contracts — which GAO said amounts to non-competitive contracting — and for bunching spending in the last month of the fiscal year. In regard to that practice, an old dodge to clean out the till before appealing to Congress for more money, GAO said two-thirds of the studied contracts were awarded in the last month of the fiscal year, and the Maritime Administration managed to shovel out 42 per cent of them in the last two working days of the year.

As for NSF's reaction to the suggestion of inadequate reporting: It's pleased with it, though it's uncertain about the extent of the problem. William Stewart, head of the section that collects R&D statistics, and Benjamin L. Olsen, who is directly in charge of the annual report, both told SGR that they figure the study will help alert agencies to the need for following NSF's reporting guidelines.

Meanwhile, Senator Percy will consult with GAO about further explorations of the subject.

(Copies of the GAO report, "Federal Agencies' Contracting for Research and Development in the Private, Profitmaking Sector," may be obtained without charge from Senator Charles Percy, Governmental Affairs Committee, US Senate, Washington, DC 20510).

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